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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

FEBRUARY 1st, 1862.

LIFE AND LABOURS OF VINCENT NOVELLO.

By MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

(Continued from page 172.)

VINCENT NOVELLO'S unaffected sympathy with pupils and musical aspirants—both professional and amateur—was a marked feature in his character throughout his own musical life. He was lavish in imparting knowledge; patient in conveying instruction, cordial in manner, hearty in communication, benevolent in encouragement. His most eminent pupil was Edward Holmes, the author of "A ramble among the musicians in Germany," and of "Mozart's Life." In order to facilitate the more assiduous study of the young man, Mr. Novello received Edward Holmes as an inmate of his own house; so that at all hours left free by other avocations, he could superintend the progress of his pupil in theory and practice. Mr. Holmes became thoroughly versed in harmony, and was, for many years, organist at Poplar Church, and at Hol-loway Chapel. He was not only a sound musician, but his taste for letters gave him that polished vigor of style which distinguishes his writings upon the Art. From his schoolfellowship with John Keats and Charles Cowden Clarke, Edward Holmes had early acquired a strong predilection for literature; and his becoming a resident under Vincent Novello's roof confirmed the bent. Books were chief sources of recreation to the master; and the pupil naturally fell into a liking that chimed with his own original preference. Reading had so great a charm for Vincent Novello, that he indulged it at every moment which did not interfere with his Art-pursuit. He would read at night; he would read as he went along the streets to his lesson-giving; and many a time have friends smiled to see him pass them by unnoticed, absorbed in his volume, making his way through the crowded thoroughfare, indifferent to the jostle of hurrying passengers. The subjects that most interested him were fiction, travel, and natural science. The romances of Walter Scott, the novels of Miss Burney and Lady Morgan, the tales of Miss Edgeworth, were main favorites of his; while works on chemistry, astronomy, and mechanics, engaged his attention, together with voyages and tours. As a youth, he had a fondness for two pastimes that fascinated him powerfully—billiard-playing and skating; but when he found that their pursuit was in danger of becoming too engrossing, and of trenching upon the time demanded by his self-dedication to Music, he resolutely abstained from either, and

gave them both up for evermore. When a very young man, also, he had a taste and talent for acting. There still exists a certain playbill of a private performance of Shakespeare's first part of Henry IV., wherein figures the part of Sir John Falstaff as played by "Mr. Howard;" which was the name assumed by young Vincent Novello on that occasion. This partiality for theatricals abided by him in the shape of interest in our best actors, and frequent going to the theatre. John Kemble, Elliston, Bannister, Munden, and Liston, Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Davenport, and Miss Kelly, were idols of his; while his admiration for Mrs. Jordan amounted to a young man's enamoured fancy. He would often afterwards expatiate on the enchantment of "her laugh, her exquisite laugh," and of "her arch roguish smile," with a gusto that betrayed the bewitchment he had once felt.

It was pleasant to mark—and still more pleasant to recall, for the emulation of his survivors—how Vincent Novello's inclinations were ever held subservient to his principles. Not only did he give up favorite sports, when they threatened to impede study; but he made his attraction for the theatre a means of cultivation and improvement for his children. As a refining influence, the highest Drama, and the best acting, are valuable in the hands of a judicious parent; and, allowed as a rare treat, they produce an impression no less good than delightful. Some of these theatre-treats remain still as bright points in "the dark backward and abysm of time" to the remembrance of Vincent Novello's children. Once, riding home on his shoulder, tired and sleepy, after the glory of going "to see the play;" so young was then the rememberer, so kind was the good father. Once, a wondrous night of finely-cast comedy, when Munden played Old Dornton; Elliston, young Dornton; Terry, Sulky; Knight, Silky; Mrs. Harlowe and Miss Kelly the Widow and the Spinster, in "The Road to Ruin;" and when the farce was "The Turnpike Gate," with Munden as Crack, the Cobbler. Once, a night of joyful surprise, when the father, coming home tired with a long day's school-teaching, bade his little girl get Shakespeare's play of "Much ado about nothing," and read him the opening scenes while he ate his dinner (which she had prepared, laying the cloth for Papa, as Mamma was upstairs with the new baby); and then, as a reward for his daughter's good housewifery, telling her to put on her bonnet and he would take her to Covent Garden Theatre, to see Charles Kemble play Benedick.

Vincent Novello's economy of time, and his indefatigable industry, were the reason of his achieving so much. That which has been printed and given to the world is scarcely a third of the manuscripts he made. His editing generally implied re-writing the whole work; voice-parts as well as separate accompaniment, which he himself added. His speed in copying was really

wonderful; while the neatness and distinctness of the writing equalled its rapidity. An anecdote will serve to exemplify his power in this respect. At the Musical Festival in 1828, in York Minster, he obtained permission to have a copy taken of Purcell's four anthems, and the Evening Service in G minor, which were unique in the Minster library. The copyist to whom Mr. Novello applied, said he should require three weeks to transcribe them; and next morning, on consideration, said they would more probably take five weeks to write out. Mr. Novello smiled, and replied that he himself had already made a copy of the whole series during the previous day; for, that having begun to look them over, he had set to at once, and never left his task till it was completed. The original manuscripts were destroyed in the fire at York Minster not long after, and Vincent Novello was enabled to give back a transcript of that music to the Minster library, which, but for his assiduity, would have been lost to the world.

Of the music which he gained leave to transcribe from the library in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Mr. Novello selected and copied material for ten volumes beyond the five he published under the title of "The Fitzwilliam Music."

The extreme correctness of his works arose from his habit of keeping a pocket-book in four columns (for the page, the staff, the bar, the note), wherein errors were carefully noted at the time of discovery, when playing or reading the works after publication, and which errors he pertinaciously required should be corrected in the plates, with a proof sent to him; thereby causing much impatience to his engraver, but securing the continued improvement of his editions. His particularity and exactitude in the matter of proof-sheets and revises were remarkable. Rarely did he allow the proofs of the day to remain uncorrected; so that he was unburdened by arrears. At some period of the twenty-four hours he was sure to find some odd moment in which to fulfil the task of correction; and often the roll of proofs from the coat-pocket, and the scrap of red pencil from the waistcoat-pocket, were drawn forth during the few minutes of waiting for a meal, or while preparing to go out. No man better understood and put in practice the philosophy of the French proverb, *Sauvez vos quarts-d'heures*. Not only had he this wisdom of saving valuable stray quarters of hours; but he possessed that faculty of "making time," with which very diligent and very persevering people are endued. Frequently, after returning from the theatre, or after an evening's brilliant conversation and gay supper with some friends, Vincent Novello would sit down to a batch of proofs with as wakeful and active a spirit of energy as though it were noon-day instead of long past midnight. His order and method equalled his industry and perseverance. He was not orderly

according to some persons' ideas of neatness; his books and papers lay in heaps that looked disorderly: but he had his own notions of "classing" them, as he called it; and had the same repugnance to their being arranged or dusted by other hands than his own, which that zealous antiquary, Jonathan Oldbuck felt, when protesting against the officiousness of his "womankind." Vincent Novello was methodical after his own peculiar fashion; and though it might not be an ordinary fashion, yet it had extraordinarily advantageous results. His account-books had not the conventional appearance of ledgers, and were not kept on the system pursued by clerklly personages; but they presented a minute and accurate statement of each transaction, and gave faithful record of every receipt and payment. His note-books were plain and simple: but they contained details both luminous and voluminous, such as few gilt-edged or richly-bound memorandum-books can boast. In examining musical libraries, he made very ample notes: not only lists of compositions by the various authors; but thematic catalogues, so as to be able to collate or compare with the contents of other manuscript sources.

Punctuality was a prominent characteristic of Vincent Novello. Not only in professional engagements was he scrupulously exact, but he observed the same precision with regard to pleasure appointments. He liked to be earlier than the time specified: and at a coach office or railway station, a playhouse or a picture gallery, he always arrived a few minutes beforehand; saying that he preferred waiting on the spot, to the chance of being there too late. In his professional avocations, he was so punctual in attendance, that during the seven-and-twenty years that he taught in one school (in Brunswick Square), he never missed a single day in the bi-weekly lesson-giving there; and during the six-and-twenty years that he played the organ at the Portuguese Embassy's Chapel in South Street, Grosvenor Square, he never missed the performance of a single Sunday's service, with the exception of one, which occurred at a period when a private grief (the recent loss of a favorite child) had rendered this exertion in public impossible to him.

Vincent Novello's attachment to this favorite child, his boy Sydney, had something of an exclusive fondness about it, that rendered it different from his affection towards his other children. The little fellow was singularly handsome—what is known in common parlance as "the flower of the flock." Symmetry of form and limb, bloom of complexion, regularity of feature, grace and freedom of action, curly gold-brown hair, eyes of a deep violet blue, thick long eyelashes, and a certain brightness, brilliancy, and dash in all he said and did, made this boy a family darling. Some of his scape-grace ways—such as once upon a time mounting on a stool to reach the candle, that he might try and burn off at its flame some

of the auburn brushes on his eyelids, which he chose to consider a troublesome appendage, from their frequently attracting notice and admiration under the guise of laughing at them—made him only the more an idol among his brothers and sisters; while the parents shared the idolatry even in reproving the prank. As for the father, he hardly cared to veil his idolizing by affected reproof; he openly spoiled Sydney, and the spoiling seemed universally admitted as the most natural thing in the world. He would seat the boy on his knee while writing; break off his work to attend to or play with him; give up talking to answer his prattle and questions; and sit down to the pianoforte, after giving lessons on it for hours, to play the dances which the boy asked for, one after another. Many an antiquated country-dance air of “The Tank,” “The Triumph,” or “Sir Roger de Coverly,” are associated with Sydney’s childish demand for “More, Papa, more!” while an old French tune, known as *Voulez vous danser, Mademoiselle?* was established by him as the one he meant to ask for when he despotically said—“Now play the Fatty-forty, Mr. Vincent.”

The anguish felt on the death of this boy-treasure was the foundation of the first of those long and severe fits of illness, which beset Vincent Novello at intervals during certain periods of his life. They were not so much illness, as malady of the spirits; not so much physical ailment as utter depression, dejection, and prostration of the faculty for enjoyment. While the digestive organs assuredly suffered to a certain amount, the nervous temperament was disordered to a pitiable degree. So long as this sombre visitation lasted, a deep melancholy settled upon the patient’s mind, and deprived it of all powers of taking pleasure in life, family, friends, or pursuits. Even his beloved Art, his adored Music, ceased to have interest for him; and it was only mechanically, and as a mere matter of principle, that he fulfilled his professional duties. He attended to his pupils, he superintended his various publications as usual, so far as intellectual exertion was concerned; but the elastic delight, the joyful alacrity with which he labored in his musical avocation when blessed with full health, entirely vanished while under the dominion of these periodical fits of disordered liver, or spleen. Obstruction of bile, from over sedentary habits, was the cause frequently assigned by medical men as the one which occasioned these visitations of gloom; and it is probable that, in a great measure, devotion to Art-toil, with carelessness in the matter of regular meal times, helped to originate those fits of illness, one of the earliest of which attacked him on the loss of Sydney. Not long before this boy’s death, the family had removed from 240, Oxford Street, to 8, Percy Street, Bedford Square: and here for a few years (from about 1820 to 1823) they resided. It was during this period that Mr. Novello obtained from

Prince Esterhazy the permission to publish some more of Haydn’s Masses; and the energy with which he entered into this new production aided to revive his suspended spirit of musical interest.

The next removal of the Novellos was to Shacklewell Green; as Vincent had an idea that country walks, with cessation from the late hours and social gatherings of town existence, would conduce to entirely restore his health.

The experiment proved partially successful; but, after two or three years’ trial, was abandoned, from the parents’ conviction that their children’s advancement in the world would suffer from protracted seclusion in a suburban village. Now that their boys and girls were reaching an age to require placing in such positions as would enable them advantageously to commence their several appointed careers, Mr. and Mrs. Novello returned to the metropolis, and went to live at 22, Bedford Street, Covent Garden, as being a central situation; although they soon left this house for another no less so—No. 66, Gt. Queen Street, Lincoln’s Inn.


Her marriage with a man of letters, when she had just attained her nineteenth year, confirmed their eldest daughter’s early ambition to make literature her profession; while their eldest son’s decided bent for chemistry and mechanics, which seemed to mark him out by preference for an engineer or a man of practical science, had been merged, on prudential considerations, in a sedulous cultivation and acquirement of such knowledge as should best fit him for becoming a music publisher, and promulgator of his father’s musical productions. The second daughter’s sweet voice and predilection for the stage, induced her parents to place her under the tuition of Mrs. Blaine Hunt, formerly Miss Merry, a fellow-pupil with Miss Stephens of Thomas Welsh; and the second son’s marked talent for painting—amounting to genius, in its youthful strength of ability and development—led his father and mother to send Edward as a student to Mr. Sass, the first master for young artists, in skilful preparation as draughtsmen before they became colourists. The third daughter, Emma, subsequently evinced a similar inclination for an artist’s career; and was also a pupil in Mr. Sass’s studio.

Having thus promoted their elder children’s establishment in suitable channels for happily, honorably, and independently earning future livelihood, Mr. and Mrs. Novello, in the year 1829, took a pleasant journey together to Germany, for the fulfilment of a no less pleasant purpose. This was the presentation of a sum of money to Mozart’s sister, Madame Sonnenberg: which sum had been subscribed by some musical admirers of the great composer, who had heard with deep sympathy and concern that she was then in poor health and poorer means. These gentlemen intrusted their friend and brother-subscriber (indeed, he was the

original proposer of the subscription) Vincent Novello, with the execution of what they knew would be a most welcome commission to him,—the conveyance of this contribution to Mozart's sister; and in the summer season husband and wife set out for Salzburg. An extract from Vincent Novello's own diary, kept during the memorable journey, will best describe the circumstances of an event interesting to all lovers of Mozart: "*Monday, July 15th.*—A still more delightful day, if possible, than yesterday—Mozart's son came to me at about 11 to conduct us to his aunt Sonnenberg—after a little chat we accompanied him to her house, which was within a few yards of where we resided.—It seems that she had passed a very restless and sleepless night for fear we should not come to see her, and had repeatedly expressed her regret that we had not been admitted when we first called. On entering the room, the sister of Mozart was reclining placidly in bed—but blind, feeble, and nearly speechless.—Her nephew kindly explained to her who we were, and she seemed to derive much gratification from the intelligence we conveyed to her. During the whole time, I held her poor thin hand in mine, and pressed it with the sincere cordiality of an old friend of her brother. She appeared particularly pleased that the little present we had brought her should have arrived just before her own Saint's day (St. Ann, the 26th of the month). Her own birthday is on the 30th, on which day she will have completed her 78th year. Her voice is nearly extinct, and she appears to be fast approaching 'that bourn from whence no traveller returns.' Her face, though much changed by illness and drawn by age, still bears a strong resemblance to the portraits that have been engraved of her, but it was difficult to believe that the helpless and languid figure which was extended before us was formerly the little girl represented as standing by the side of her brother, and singing to his accompaniment. Near the bed was the original painting of which Madame Nissen has a small copy, and which has been engraved in the Biography, representing Mozart and his sister playing a duett on the piano, the likeness of Mozart's mother in a frame, and the father leaning on the piano with a violin in his hand. In the adjoining apartment, over the sofa, was the print which his son told me was generally considered the best likeness after that in Madame Nissen's possession (in which opinion he himself coincided).^{*} Around the room was hung a very numerous collection of portraits of the greatest painters, amongst whom I particularly noticed those of Vandyck and Rembrandt. In another part of the room was a miniature of herself; another of her son (who had some resemblance to Leigh Hunt); and another likeness in miniature of Mozart. In the middle of the room stood the instrument on which she had

often played duetts with her brother. It was a kind of clavichord—with black keys for the naturals and white ones for the sharps, like our old English Cathedral organs—the compass was

from , and had evidently

been constructed before the additional keys were invented. The tone was soft, and some of the bass notes, especially those of the lowest octave Cs  were of a good quality;

at the time it was made, it was doubtless considered an excellent instrument. You may be sure that I touched the keys which had been pressed by Mozart's fingers, with great interest. Mozart's son also played a few chords upon it with evident pleasure; the key he chose was that of C minor; and what he did, though short, was quite sufficient to show the accomplished musician. On the desk were two pieces of music, the last which Mozart's sister had ever played, before she took to her bed, six months ago. They were the "O cara Armonia" from her brother's opera of the *Zauberflöte*, and the Minuet in his *Don Giovanni*;—this, to me, was a most touching proof of her continued sisterly attachment to him to the last, and of her tasteful partiality for his inimitable productions. About two days before we arrived she had desired to be carried from her bed, and placed at the instrument. On trying to play she found that although she could still execute a few passages with her *right* hand, yet with her *left* hand she could no longer press down the keys, and it was but too evident that her powers on that side were entirely gone.

"On leaving this estimable and interesting lady, both Mary and myself could not refrain from kissing her weak and emaciated hand with tender respect, convinced as we were that we should never again behold her. I fear that she cannot continue much longer in her present exhausted state; but whenever that hour arrives which no one living can ultimately avoid, I can only hope that it will not be attended with the least suffering, and that she will calmly cease to breathe as if she were merely sinking into a tranquil sleep. I was particularly charmed by the respectful and kind cordiality with which Mozart's son behaved to her; calling her repeatedly "Meine liebe Tante," and exerting himself to the utmost to ascertain and fulfil all her wishes."

Another extract, undated, but evidently later on, is subjoined, as showing the writer's enthusiastic interest in the woman beloved as a wife by Mozart—Vincent Novello's favorite composer. He seems to have met her, on the evening he refers to, at a friend's house; for he writes thus:—"After supper I had the gratification of seeing Mozart's widow and her sister safe

^{*} This, in its simple brown frame, was afterwards presented by Mozart's son to Vincent Novello.

home. They had brought their servant with them, to save my doing so, and would fain have persuaded me there was not the least necessity for my accompanying them home; but (as I told her) it was not every evening that I could enjoy the society of so rare a companion as one who had been the companion of Mozart, and she politely gave up the little friendly contest, and at once took my arm as cordially as if I had been her own brother. There was a beautiful moon shining on the distant mountains, and illuminating both the old Gothic church of the Convent and the ancient fortress above. The interesting conversation which took place, and the enchanting beauty of the surrounding scenery, rendered this one of the most romantic and delightful walks I ever enjoyed. On our arrival at the house I was at last obliged to take my leave; when Madame Mozart* once more shook hands with me most cordially, and assured me (after renewing her promise to write to me) that our visit altogether to Salzburg has been one of the most gratifying compliments which had been paid for several years both to herself and to the memory of 'her Mozart.' I need not say what a crowd of interesting associations, curious thoughts, and singular reflections, passed through my mind in the course of my solitary walk back to my Inn."

(To be continued.)

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We cannot undertake to return offered contributions; the authors, therefore, will do well to retain copies.

We would request those who send us country newspapers, wishing us to read particular paragraphs, to mark the passage, by cutting a slip in the paper near it.

Colored Envelopes are sent to all Subscribers whose payment in advance is exhausted. The paper will be discontinued where the Subscriber neglects to renew. We again remind those who are disappointed in getting back numbers, that only the music pages are stereotyped, and of the rest of the paper, only sufficient are printed to supply the current sale.

Notices of concerts and other information supplied by our friends in the country, must be forwarded as early as possible after the occurrence, otherwise they cannot be inserted. Our correspondents must specifically denote the date of each concert, for without such date no notice can be taken of the performance. All communications must be authenticated by the proper name and address of the writer.

Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

AIGBURTH (near Liverpool).—A concert was given here on the 2nd of January; the vocalists engaged were Mrs. Skeaf, Miss Bennet, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Hughes. Solo pianoforte and conductor, Mr. Skeaf.

ALBION HALL, LONDON WALL.—An evening concert was given by Mr. George Jenkinson, on Tuesday, January 7th, when selections from the works of Mendelssohn, Balfe, Bishop, Randegger, &c., were sung by the Misses Annie Cox, Kinseley, Seymour, and Jenkinson, Mr. Denvall and Mr. Rudkin; including solos on the pianoforte by Mr. H. Lister, and violin by Mr. R. Jefferies. Mr. Jenkinson conducted, and took part in several vocal pieces during the evening.

ANDOVER.—The Choral Society gave a concert in the Town Hall, on Tuesday, the 21st ult. The programme contained a selection of sacred and secular music. The principal vocalists were Miss E. Criswick, Mrs. Gregory,

Mrs. Hitchcock, and Messrs. Gibbs, Stephens, Browne, and Eyles. Miss Criswick and Mr. Bennett performed on the pianoforte, and Mr. Bennett conducted.

BACUP.—On New Year's Day, the Wesleyans of this town opened their new Day Schools, which have been erected at a cost of nearly £4000. In the afternoon upwards of 1300 persons sat down to refreshments provided for the occasion, and after a public meeting had been held, some agreeable music was performed by the choir of the Chapel. The principal singers were Miss King, Miss Maden, Mr. Cockrill, and Mr. Hudson, assisted by a chorus of nearly 30 voices, under the direction of Mr. Land, the honorary organist.

BARLASTON.—An entertainment was given in the school-room of this village, on the 9th ult., when Mr. Chantrey performed on the pianoforte, and his pupil, Miss Yearsley, sang several agreeable ballads. Mr. Samuel Taylor and Mr. Wedgwood recited various pieces of poetry in an effective style.

BIRSTALL.—A new organ, built by Mr. Hopkinson, of Birstall was opened on Wednesday, the 15th, and Sunday, the 19th ult., in Salem Independent Chapel. A selection of sacred music was performed, when Mr. Hopkinson and Mr. Lee presided, and brought out the qualities of the instrument with good effect.

BISHOPSTEIGNTON.—The annual concert, given by the Choral Society in this place, was held at the school-room on the 8th ult., when there was a good selection of popular music performed, including two overtures by the Teignmouth band, which was led by Sir Warwick H. Tonkin. The members are much indebted to Miss Bengough for the energy she has shown in bringing the society to its present state of efficiency.

BLAKENEY (Gloucestershire).—An amateur performance took place on December 26th, 1861, in aid of a fund to establish a reading-room. The Blakeney brass band assisted. Mr. Wm. Hulin presided at the piano, and Mr. F. Frost accompanied the glees upon the harmonium. The performance, which included some of the classical quartett music, of Pleyel, Haydn, and Winter, and was interspersed with glees, songs, &c., went off with much spirit.

BRENTFORD.—A concert was given at the Town Hall, on Friday evening, December 27th, in aid of the organ fund of the new district church, Old Brentford. The soloists were Miss Eyles, Madame Gordon, Mr. A. Lester, Mr. Pelham, and Mr. Henry, who sang their parts with care and precision. The choruses and four-part songs were well sustained by the choir of the district church, assisted by some members of the Sacred Harmonic Society, and Mr. Henry Leslie's choir. The programme consisted entirely of secular music. The conductor was Mr. Sherriff, to whom much praise is due for his zeal in getting up the concert.

BRISTOL.—The Bristol and Clifton Harmonic Society gave a performance of the oratorio *Samson* on the 26th of December. The chief parts were sustained by Mr. Wilbye Cooper, Mr. Thomas, Miss Watson, Mrs. P. J. Smith, and Mr. Merrick. The instrumentalists included Messrs. Blagrove and Harper, violin and trumpet. The choruses and accompaniments were efficiently rendered under the direction of Mr. P. J. Smith.

BROMPTON.—The choir of Trinity Church gave their annual concert on Tuesday evening, January 14th, under the direction of Mr. Meadows, the choir-master. Mr. Lahee, organist of the church, presided at the pianoforte, and played two solos. The solo singers included Miss Ward, who sang "Let the bright seraphim," accompanied on the trumpet by Mr. Ward.

BURY.—The performance of the *Creation* by the members of the Athenæum Choral Society, with the assistance of some professional musicians engaged for the occasion, took place in the Lecture Hall of the Athenæum, on the 24th ult. The principal vocalists were Miss Annie Cox, Mr. Dyson, and Mr. Lambert. Mr. Dyer led the or-

* Vincent Novello involuntarily calls her so; though she was then Madame Nissen, having married a second time.